

# *Russia says NATO building up troops along border under guise of drills*

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Moscow, December 3 (RHC)-- Russian Deputy Defense Minister Colonel General Alexander Fomin has expressed concern over what he has described as a NATO military build-up along the Russian border under the cover of military drills. Speaking to reporters in Moscow, he said: "The NATO member-countries are arming themselves, with troops, heavy and armored vehicles being amassed in the Baltic countries, Poland and other countries under the guise of drills."

The deputy defense minister further complained that some of the countries currently building up their NATO-enforced military presence against Russia do so while being historically beholden to the country.

"We lost over 600,000 lives for Poland. Now Poland is the key proponent of that plan and is ready to open a base and three command centers on its soil," said Fomin, referring to Soviet World War II casualties as a result of the fight against Nazi forces in Poland.

Last January, 3,500 American troops entered Poland as part of the United States-led Operation Atlantic Resolve to "deter Russian aggression." The troops, further enforced with another 1,000 strong multinational NATO battalion, plan to rotate in the neighboring countries of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria,

Hungary and Romania on a regular basis.

A few months later, Poland also offered to spend up to 2 billion dollars to set up a permanent U.S. military base in the country, saying that the move will further help deter Russia.

Operation Atlantic Resolve was set up following Crimea's separation from Ukraine and subsequent reunion with Russia after a referendum in March 2014. The referendum happened shortly after Ukraine's democratically-elected government was overthrown and replaced with a pro-Western government.

NATO and specifically the U.S. have since focused on improving military infrastructure and readiness in Eastern Europe, deploying missile batteries and conducting multi-national military drills in the region, raising Moscow's alarm.

Last week, Russia's naval forces seized three Ukrainian vessels after they illegally entered Russian waters off the coast of Crimea in the Sea of Azov, further complicating strained Moscow-NATO relations.

Russia later announced that it had deployed its advanced S-400 air defense missile systems in Crimea. The move followed Ukraine's call for NATO presence in the region in retaliation for the seized ships.

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